

IALSS

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I. Introduction

In order to facilitate our communication capabilities, the management team of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey wishes to initiate a series of Bulletins. This information tool will be electronically distributed to you on a monthly basis (more often if the need presents itself). Recipients include all National Project Managers, members of the Project Advisory Group, experts participating in the skill domains development and various friends of the Survey. This new series of bulletins is aimed at informing its audience about the development of the survey, upcoming important events and various tidbits of information that should be shared by all. Every reader is invited to offer suggestions and feedback about this initiative to the management team. Largely inspired by the former bulletins distributed during the implementation of the IALS

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and SIALS surveys, these bulletins will help us all keep in touch with current developments. Since the information contained in these bulletins is largely dependent on information received from sources, such as yourself, the author(s) welcome any suggestions for necessary corrections and adjustments.

Yvan Clermont
IALSS Coordinator

II. Project Advisory Group Meeting - Paris, January 2000

On January 14, the IALSS management team held its third PAG meeting at OECD Headquarters in Paris. The agenda was quite full, covering the following topics:

- development of tests,
- development of the background questionnaire,
- the Second Adult Literacy Survey,
- next steps of IALSS, and
- the long-term vision for future surveys on adult competencies.

Because, this particular bulletin focuses on IALSS development, participation of countries and important upcoming events, most of the topics covered were addressed at the last PAG meeting in Paris.

III. IALSS development status report

The following describes the status of the background questionnaire development and each of the skill domain assessments.

1. Background questionnaire

Researchers from WESTAT and Statistics Canada have done extensive work in redesigning the background questionnaire for our survey. This wasn't an easy task as new skill domains were considered and the administration time needed to remain the same (i.e. 30 minutes maximum). After a careful study of all previous questionnaires and examining the outcomes of literacy in a broader sense, seven important dimensions were identified: Labour Force, Income, Literacy and Numeracy exposure, Participation in Education and Learning, Educational Attainment, Well-being and Social Capital.

At this point, WESTAT and Statistics Canada are working on adjustments to each module so that a more refined proposal for the BQ can be sent to all NPM for review and comments. This will be distributed in preparation for the BQ Meeting to be held in Ottawa on March 26 through the 28, 2000.

A Canadian expert on literacy and Lynn Barr-Telford at Statistics Canada are drafting a policy paper that provides justification of the questionnaire content and the survey as a whole. A first draft of this paper should soon be sent to all NPM's.

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2. Prose and document

Prose and document item development took place in two distinct rounds. The first round of development consisted of a network of networks created in May 1999. Network leaders at that meeting represented the following countries:

- Canada (English speaking)
- China
- Eastern European network
 - Hungary
- French-Italian network
 - Belgium (French speaking)
 - Italy

- Switzerland (French speaking)
- Portugal
- Scandinavian network
 - Denmark
 - Norway
 - Latvia
 - Sweden
- South American network
 - Chile
 - Costa-Rica
 - Mexico
 - Venezuela

In the second round, additional countries were invited to participate in item development. After the first National Study Manager meeting, experts from the following countries joined the effort:

- Austria
- Canada (French speaking)
- Czech Republic
- Germany
- Hungary (second participant)
- Italy (second participant)
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Sweden (second and third participant)
- Switzerland (German speaking)
- United States

The item construction training for these new participants was provided in late October in Utrecht.

Each participating individual was asked to develop items based on an average total of 5 stimuli pertaining to both the prose and document literacy domains. In total, more than a hundred stimuli proposals are expected in both prose and document literacy. Some participants have submitted more items or stimuli than required, while others have had a more limited role due to their own work or time constraints.

At this moment, a total of 115 stimuli have been received and revised. These items were received from Austria, Denmark, Hungary (1st), Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland (French & German speaking). Items from the following

countries were received but have not yet been revised: Belgium (French speaking), Canada (both French and English speaking), Chile, Costa-Rica, Mexico, United States and Venezuela. Stimuli are still expected from, China, The Czech Republic, Sweden (2 & 3), Germany and The Netherlands.

Country	Revision Status	Number of acceptable stimuli
Denmark (1)	R & R	5
Hungary (1)	R & R	4
Italy (1)	R & R	10
Latvia	R & R	4
Norway	R & R	5
Portugal	R & R	13
Sweden (1)	R & R	5
Swiss (French)	R & R	12
Chile	R	
Venezuela	R	
Mexico	R	
Costa-Rica	R	
Belgium (French)	R	
Hungary (2)	R	
Sweden (2 & 3)	R	
Austria	R	
Swiss (German)	R	
Luxembourg	R	
Canada (English)	NR	
Canada (French)	NR	
United States	R	
Czech Republic	NR	
Netherlands	NR	
Italy (2)	NR	
China	NR	
Germany	NR	

Notes: R & R = received and revised
R = received but not revised yet
NR = not received yet.

The first 115 revised stimuli are equally distributed across the prose and document domains. 13 of the initial group have been judged acceptable as is, 19 are acceptable with minor revisions and 18 are acceptable with major revision. After revising the first set of items, a total of 50 stimuli representing

about 150 items of prose and document have been shown to work well. The remaining 65 stimuli were rejected for a variety of reasons including: duplication with existing material, cross-cultural suitability, sensitivity concerns, quickly outdated content, length or the stimulus does not yield a sufficiently large number of items. The remaining items and stimuli are expected to arrive at both Statistics Canada and ETS throughout the month of January. The revision process will continue at a similar pace. In all, at least 230 stimuli will have been proposed. At the present time, the item pool is sufficiently large to accommodate a completely new test.

1ST Revision Phase

Every participating country and a small number of independent experts were recently invited to participate in a first revision of all stimuli, items and scoring guides provided by the individual item writers. This review is primarily concerned with cultural-linguistic appropriateness and sensitivity. A revision package should soon be forwarded by regular mail to all NPM and independent experts.

During the month of February, a second package of stimuli, items and scoring guides coming from the remaining items developers should be forwarded to independent experts and the same NPM for a first glance revision.

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3. Numeracy

At the last National Project Managers meeting, the team leader for the numeracy development team, Iddo Gal, presented the development status of the numeracy domain. At that time, the numeracy team had developed 80 items that had been administered to a sample of more than 700 respondents located in Amsterdam and Washington D.C.

Of the 80 original tested items, 68 yielded sufficiently good psychometric properties to be kept as is (58 items) or with revision (10 items). The remaining 12 items were simply dropped. Given the original objective of having 80 items for the

pilot, a concern was raised regarding this lower number of acceptable items. Because the remaining pool of 68 items did not sufficiently represent the different facets of numeracy, as stated in the conceptual framework, and, in contrast to the prose and document literacy development, the numeracy test is being developed by a very limited number of countries (United States, Australia, Netherlands and Israel), at the last National Project Managers meeting in Luxembourg, a call for numeracy items was made to the participating countries.

In response the November training session in Utrecht included representatives from Austria, Sweden, The Czech Republic and Hungary. Each of these countries supplied the project with an expert in adult or mathematics education to help the numeracy team field a new pool of items throughout a second mini-feasibility study.

This second mini-feasibility took place in Utrecht on January 25th and in Los Angeles on January 29th using an admittedly small total sample of nearly 100 respondents. The test will permit the analysis of 30 items, some of which are completely new and other are revised version from the previous test. Of the 30 new items, close to 10 are from the new contributing countries and the remaining 20 were developed by the original numeracy team members. A database containing information about these new items should be ready by early February. Statistics Canada and numeracy team members will conduct an analysis of the new data and are expected to discuss the results and make suggestion on any necessary further steps at a meeting in Montreal in mid-February.

The numeracy team will provide a CD-ROM containing the 50 best items along with their respective administration and scoring guides by late February (the material will be presented in English). By the end of March., the numeracy team will provide the project with a revised and final conceptual framework (based on an analysis of the comments received by the numerous reviewers) and the remaining set of useable items along with their related guides.

The Review Process

The numeracy team initiated a review of the conceptual framework and a set of selected items in November 1999 among 16 selected experts in the field of adult and math education. The 16 reviewers came from Australia (3), Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands (2), Sweden, The United Kingdom (2) and The United States (4). A summary of these reviews will be delivered in March. Preliminary reading of these comments leads us to believe that the new assessment has been very well received in the educational community. The comments about the coverage and the direction of the assessment are equally positive. While some comments from the Math education experts indicate a possible lack of tasks requiring modeling and resolution of complicated problems with mathematical notations, the adult education experts appear to be more positive about the assessment design. Other reviewers seem to push toward enlarging the numeracy domain to include the emotive approach to mathematics. Reviewers were also asked to comment on their anticipation of the usefulness of the assessment from a policy viewpoint.

All NPM's and/or their experts will be invited to participate in a final stimuli/items revision process. A revision kit will be sent soon.

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4. Problem Solving

To date, eight different projects have been developed by the Institut für Bildungsforschung (IBF). Each project consists of several tasks that take about 20 minutes to complete. The eight projects consist of organizing a family reunion, buying a bicycle, building a space station, renovating a club house, organizing a visit for a foreign choir, organizing a sport rally, finding a job and moving apartments. The projects were tested in German and seemed to be working well. The same

projects were also recently tested in their English version in Washington D.C. Statistics Canada is currently scoring and capturing the data pertaining to the last four projects, and the IBF is performing the analysis of the English database. Preliminary analysis of the results should soon be available

Some design work related to scoring on this assessment remains. To this end, ETS will revise the overall presentation of the projects and the data analysis performed by IBF by the beginning of February. In addition, IBF has agreed to improve the conceptual framework in order to clarify the interpretation of the results that will be made.

All NPM's and/or their experts will be invited to participate in a final stimuli/items revision process. A revision kit will be sent soon.

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5. Teamwork & Information, Communication and Technology Literacy (ICTL)

Participants at the last National Project Managers meeting proposed that both the Information, Communication and Technology Literacy and Teamwork domains be presented as indirect assessments appended to the background questionnaire. In addition, the creation of an expanded group of experts comprised of both new and original members was encouraged in order to review and possibly redesign these assessments. This was done to further refine the existing measures and to benefit future round of the IALSS by creating a true psychometric test for both of these domains.

Since the last Team Leaders meeting in Princeton and the last National Project Managers Meeting in Luxembourg, the original developers of both ICTL and Teamwork have produced revised versions of their original work. Also, a document/paper produced by Vittoria Gallina from Italy should soon be available and will be distributed to all individuals participating in the redesign of ICTL & Teamwork.

Sweden has volunteered experts in the domain of Teamwork to supply additional input into the development of that domain. Preliminary contacts have already been made and the experts from Sweden are currently revising the original tools. A working meeting between the original and new developers should take place in the coming months and we are aiming at proposing a final instrument for both domains in March. If time and budget permits, a small feasibility study might take place in Ottawa and possibly Stockholm. The opportunity to test certain new modules of the background questionnaire would likely take place at the same time.

All NPM's and/or their experts will be invited to participate in a final content revision process.

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6. Level 1

In October 1999, a meeting of experts in literacy was called in Princeton to discuss the possibility of overcoming one of the previous IALS deficiencies, namely the lack of discrimination at level 1. Vincent Greaney from the World Bank, John Strucker from Harvard University, Gregg Brooks from NFER (Britain) and Stan Jones from Carleton University were present along with a group of American and Canadian government representatives.

It was agreed that the new interacting components of literacy and the lower rungs measurements should be discussed and proposed in a Position Paper setting out the thinking of the meeting on how the literacy section of IALSS should be modified. The proposed structure of this Position Paper was as follows:

- 1) Background/rationale
- 2) Below Level 2 literacy domain specification

- a) Components, both existing tests or measures and newly constructed measures
 - b) Creating the lower rungs of the ladder
 - c) Background information
- 3) How do these 3 pieces fit together? What story could they tell?
- 4) Proposed feasibility study, to take place in 2001

The Level 1 Position paper should be available in March 2000 and will be forwarded to all NPM.

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IV. Next meetings

Statistics Canada is assuming the responsibility of arranging the following upcoming meetings for the IALSS:

Numeracy development meeting

Montreal, February 16 to February 20, 2000

Attend: Numeracy team members and project coordinator

Background questionnaire draft presentation and discussion

Ottawa, March 26 –28, 2000

Attend: representatives from each participating country

Information, Communication, and Technology Literacy and Teamwork meeting

Ottawa, February (date to be determined)

Attend: Swedish, Canadian and American ICTL and Teamwork experts

1st Pre-pilot translation meeting (work through meeting)

June 5-6, 2000, location to be determined

Attends: translators and NPM of all countries

2nd Translation meeting (review meeting)

September 2000, location to be determined

Attends: NPM

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V. Countries Participating in IALSS

Countries likely to participate in the first round (some of them have not yet made a final decision)

Austria
Canada
China
Denmark
Finland
Great Britain
Hungary
Italy
Luxembourg
Norway
Sweden
Switzerland
United States

Other European and South American countries are now showing great interest for joining this or subsequent rounds.

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VI. Name of the Survey

The name of the Survey has been changed from The **International Life Skills Survey (ILSS)** to The **International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)**. This new name is not definite and at the last PAG meeting, discussions went on regarding the appropriate name for the survey. The following names were suggested and a final choice has yet to be made:

- 1) International Life Skills Survey (ILSS)
- 2) International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)
- 3) International Adult Literacy Survey Plus (IALS plus)
- 4) Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Program (ALL)
- 5) Adult Literacy and Life Skills Project (ALLP)

- 6) Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLS)
- 7) International Adult Literacy and Literacy skills Survey (IALSS)
- 8) International Survey of Literacy and Life Skills (IISLLS)

Should you have any other preference, please send them to us. We will entertain any reasonable suggestion.

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